

Pubic Lice

(Crabs)

What is pubic lice?

Pubic lice are infestations of pediculosis or crab lice in the pubic area. It may occur occasionally in facial hair, on eyelashes, under the arms or on other body surfaces.

Who gets pubic lice?

Pubic (Crab) infestation usually is found among sexually active individuals. However, any person may get pubic lice under the right conditions (i.e., exposure to contaminated clothes, towels, bedding, etc.).

How is pubic lice spread?

They are most often spread through sexual contact. Pubic lice also may be spread through contact with personal items such as towels, clothing or bedding. Lice from animals do not infect humans.

What are the symptoms of pubic lice?

Itching around the genital area occurs with pubic lice infestations.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

It may take two to three weeks or longer for a person to notice the intense itching associated with lice infestation.

When and for how long is a person able to spread pubic lice?

A person may spread pubic lice as long as lice or eggs remain alive on the infested person or his or her clothing. Under best conditions, the eggs hatch in a week and maturity is reached about eight to 10 days after hatching.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No.

What complications can happen from pubic lice?

Infection may occur from scratching.

What is the treatment for pubic lice?

Medication containing chemicals that kill lice should be used according to manufacturer's directions. These are available by prescription or bought over the counter. Manual removal of eggs from the eyebrows and eyelashes is recommended. Household and sexual contacts should be examined and treated as necessary.

What can be done to prevent the spread of pubic lice?

Avoid contact with infested individuals. If infested, get prompt treatment. Household and sexual contacts should be examined and treated as necessary. Clothing and bedding should be laundered in hot water. Non-washable items can be vacuumed or dry-cleaned.

